

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND:YW
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
S/PRS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM
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O 092349Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USCINCEUR
JCS
DOD
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MARCH 9

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE
EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR MARCH 9, 1978.
FYI ONLY, SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS THOMAS RESTON.

Q. IS THERE ANY REACTION TO PRESIDENT SADAT'S INTERVIEW
WITH THE NEW YORK TIMES CALLING ON THE UNITED STATES TO
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SHOW ITS CARDS AND ITS HAND?

AND ALSO ON BEGIN'S REMARKS YESTERDAY, THAT HE WOULD NOT
BACK DOWN ON THE WEST BANK ISSUE?

A. WITH REGARD TO EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON THE UNITED STATES
PEACE ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WE HAVE BEEN FULLY ENGAGED
IN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT AT THE REQUEST OF
BOTH PARTIES AND WE EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO BE. WE CERTAINLY
SHARE THEIR DESIRE TO ACHIEVE A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT
AND WILL DO ANYTHING WE CAN TO BE HELPFUL TO THEM.

OBVIOUSLY, THE UNITED STATES HAS A DEEP NATIONAL INTEREST
OF ITS OWN IN GETTING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE
EAST. WE SUPPORT RESOLUTION 242 AND THE PRINCIPLES ON
WHICH THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

MUST BE BASED.

WORKING FROM THOSE PRINCIPLES, WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT WE
ARE, WHEN USEFUL, PREPARED TO PUT FORTH IDEAS OF OUR OWN
TO HELP THE PARTIES RESOLVE PROBLEMS.

WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT HAS REAFFIRMED
HIS COMMITMENT TO THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE CONTINUING
NEGOTIATIONS.

Q. TOM, DO YOU FEEL THAT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN IS COMMITTED TO THE PEACE PROCESS UNDER CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS?

A. YES.

Q. DOES IT PLEASE YOU?

A. YES.

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Q. WHAT PRINCIPLES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

YOU SAY THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON SOME PRINCIPLES -- WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

A. WELL, WE BELIEVE THAT AS USUAL, THAT RESOLUTION 242 AND RESOLUTION 338 FORM A BASIS FOR A FRAMEWORK FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Q. IT'S THOSE PRINCIPLES YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT? YOU ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES?

A. NO. OBVIOUSLY, MR. ATHERTON HAS BEEN OUT IN THE MIDDLE EAST SEEKING TO GET THE BEGINNINGS OF AN AGREEMENT ON A FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS NEGOTIATING PROCESS; AND THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT WORK.

Q. HAS HE ACHIEVED GENERAL AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES?

A. AS TO THE PROGRESS OF HIS NEGOTIATIONS OUT THERE, I BELIEVE THAT AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL ON THE SCENE STATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME NARROWING OF GAPS AS A RESULT OF HIS WORK, AND I AM NOT PREPARED FURTHER TO CHARACTERIZE WHAT WENT ON IN THOSE SESSIONS THAN WHAT THE AMERICAN OFFICIAL HAS.

Q. WAIT A MINUTE -- WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER? HAS THERE BEEN GENERAL AGREEMENT ON SOME PRINCIPLES OR NOT?

A. IT IS NOT MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE HAS BEEN FINAL AGREEMENT ON ALL THESE POINTS.

Q. JOHN ASKED YOU WHAT THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON WHICH
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THEY HAVE GENERAL AGREEMENT, ARE -- AND YOU SAID BASICALLY IT'S RESOLUTION 242. IF THAT'S THE CASE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR STATEMENT SAYS: "WE SUPPORT RESOLUTION 242 AND THE PRINCIPLES." ARE YOU COMMITTING AN OFFICIAL

TYPOLOGY (SIC), OR ARE YOU REFERRING TO SOMETHING ELSE,
OR WHAT?

A. I WOULD REALLY NOT CHARACTERIZE THIS PARTICULAR STATE-
MENT WHICH I HAVE JUST MADE, AS "BREAKING ANY NEW GROUND"
AT ALL.

Q. YOU ARE LEAVING ME AT LEAST, WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT
THERE HAVE BEEN WHAT YOU CALL "GENERAL" AGREEMENT ON THE
PRINCIPLES. YOU SAY THERE HASN'T BEEN "FINAL" AGREEMENT
ON THE PRINCIPLES.

HAS GENERAL AGREEMENT BEEN REACHED ON A DECLARATION OF
PRINCIPLES?

A. AS I SAID A MINUTE AGO: IT IS NOT MY UNDERSTANDING
THAT WE HAVE AGREEMENT AT THIS TIME ON A GENERAL FRAMEWORK
FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS.

THIS, FOR INSTANCE, WILL BE A MATTER WHICH WILL BE UNDER
DISCUSSION WHEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN COMES TO WASHINGTON
SHORTLY.

Q. WHEN DOES ATHERTON GET BACK?

MR. TRATTNER: TOMORROW.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE ISRAELI DECISION TO
FREEZE SETTLEMENTS?

A. I THINK WE ARE GOING TO POST SOMETHING ON THAT AFTER
THIS BRIEFING.
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Q. TOM, I AM STILL PUZZLED BY THAT ONE SENTENCE WHICH
SAYS WE SUPPORT 242 AND THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THERE IS
GENERAL AGREEMENT.

ARE YOU TELLING US NOW THAT THAT SENTENCE REALLY IS JUST
ESSENTIALLY MEANINGLESS -- OR THAT THERE IS PARTIAL
AGREEMENT ON SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES?

A. I AM REALLY NOT IN A POSITION, FROM HERE, TO GET INTO
A PRECISE STATE OF PLAY AS TO WHERE WE STAND ON TRYING
TO GET A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING THESE PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS.

Q. TOM, DURING MUCH OF THE LAST YEAR, YOU USED TO HAVE
GUIDANCE AND THE SECRETARY USED TO REFER TO THREE BASIC
PRINCIPLES, ONE INVOLVED THE NATURE OF PEACE, ANOTHER
INVOLVED A WITHDRAWAL TO SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BOUNDARIES,
A THIRD INVOLVED A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM,

SOMETIMES CALLED "IN ALL ITS ASPECTS." ARE THOSE THE PRINCIPLES YOU ARE REFERRING TO AND IS THERE AGREEMENT ON THEM?

A. OBVIOUSLY, THERE IS NOT AGREEMENT ON ALL. IF THERE WAS AGREEMENT ON ALL THREE OF THOSE PRINCIPLES, IN OUR VIEW, THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. I JUST CAN'T SAY THAT.

Q. ON THE QUESTION OF 242, THERE HAS BEEN WELL VENTED IN ISRAEL THE DISAGREEMENT NOW BETWEEN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WITHDRAWAL CLAUSE IN 242. HOW SERIOUS IS THIS DISAGREEMENT IN YOUR OPINION ON THE PEACE PROCESS?

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A. I'M ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN OVER THE PAST WEEK HERE ON THAT. YES, THERE ARE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL. WE BELIEVE THAT RESOLUTION 242 APPLIES ON ALL FRONTS AND THIS WILL BE A MATTER WHICH WILL BE TAKEN UP WHEN MR. BEGIN COMES TO WASHINGTON SHORTLY.

Q. I'M INTERESTED IN SOME OTHER PART OF YOUR STATEMENT. ARE YOU DONE WITH 242?

A. I DO HAVE SOME OTHER THINGS TO SAY ABOUT IT HERE, ON 242. I'M NOT SURE THAT IT WILL BE TOO HELPFUL TO YOU. WE HAVE SEEN THE PRESS REPORTS THAT YOU ARE PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO -- THIS IS WITH REGARD TO BEGIN'S STATEMENT THAT ISRAEL IS ENTITLED TO ITS OWN INTERPRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242. BUT WE HAVE NOT HAD ANYTHING AUTHORITY AS TO WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE SAID. WE WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE PRIME MINISTER BEGIN GETS HERE AND HE AND THE PRESIDENT HAVE A CHANCE TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS MORE THOROUGHLY.

A. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN A BEDROCK PRINCIPLE IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE FOR OVER TEN YEARS, AND AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THE EFFORTS OF ALL OF US OVER THE PAST MONTHS THAT HAVE BROUGHT US SO FAR TOWARD PEACE IN

IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL WANT TO DISCUSS THIS WITH US VERY THOROUGHLY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ON SOMETHING OF SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THEIR OWN GOAL OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

Q. LET ME CONTINUE ON THAT. IN A "DECISION OF SOMETHING OF SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE", THE IMPLICATION OF YOUR STATEMENT IS THAT THEY ARE THINKING OF RENOUNCING 242. DECISION ON WHAT?

A. I THINK THAT THEY WILL WANT TO DISCUSS VARYING INTER-

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PRETATIONS OF WHAT RESOLUTION 242 MEANS. AND, OBVIOUSLY, THE INTERPRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242 IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Q. ALL RIGHT, TOM, THEN I TAKE FROM YOUR STATEMENT THAT YOU DON'T THINK ISRAEL HAS MADE A DECISION YET? I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A CHOICE AGAIN, A AND B: I TAKE YOUR STATEMENT OT MEAN ISRAEL, AS FAR AS THE UNITED STATES IS CONCERNED, HAS NOT MADE A DECISION YET ON WHETHER 242 APPLIES TO THE WEST BANK. EVERYTHING THAT YOU HAVE SEEN, READ, AND HEARD AND BEEN ADVISED ABOUT, YOU JUST SORT OF LOOK AT AS KIND OF PRESS REPORTS THAT YOU HOPE WILL BE CRYSTALLIZED INTO A POINT OF VIEW; OR, B, DO YOU TAKE THE POINT OF VIEW THAT THEY HAVE REACHED A DECISION AND YOU HOPE THEY WOULD CHANGE IT AFTER MR. BEGIN COMES HERE? OTHERWISE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR ANSWER TO BERNIE GWERTZMAN'S QUESTION.

A. I'M SORRY, I CAN'T BE VERY HELPFUL TO YOU. FIRST OF ALL I THINK THAT WHETHER OR NOT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A FORMAL POSITION ON A MATTER IS UP TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THAT QUESTION. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID THAT, OBVIOUSLY ISRAEL HAS ITS INTERPRETATION, BUT THAT THIS WILL BE A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION. THAT IS WHAT WE'VE SAID AND WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE WHAT COMES OUT OF THESE CONVERSATIONS HERE. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO KNOW WHAT THE STATE OF PLAY WITHIN THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT IS AS TO WHETHER ANY FORMAL HAS BEEN TAKEN.

Q. I'M NOT ASKING YOU ABOUT WHAT ISRAEL THINKS. I'M ASKING YOU ABOUT WHAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT THINKS. YOU UNCLASSIFIED

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CALL IT NOW "AN INTERPRETATION." IS IT A FACT, THEN, THAT YOU DON'T TAKE IT AS THE NECESSARILY FINAL INTERPRETATION BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT OF 242 ON THE WEST BANK? IS THAT THE POINT OF YOUR STATEMENT?

A. WE BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE A MATTER OF DISCUSSION -- AND PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAS SAID IT WILL BE A MATTER OF DISCUSSION WHEN HE GETS HERE.

Q. HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY AUTHORITY TO REPORT OF WHAT HE SAID. HE SPOKE ON THE RECORD BEFORE THE KNESSET. I DON'T SEE WHY YOU NEED ANY AUTHORITATIVE REPORT OF WHAT HE SAID.

A. I'M SORRY. THAT'S THE LANGUAGE I'VE GOT HERE. I'M NOT SURE IT IS PARTICULARLY FRUITFUL FOR US TO ENGAGE IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD AUTHORITATIVE.

Q. IS IT THE AMERICAN VIEW THAT 242 CALLS FOR SOME, BUT NOT NECESSARILY TOTAL, WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK?

A. I'M NOT GOING TO GET INTO THAT INTERPRETATION. THIS HAS BEEN A MATTER OF DISPUTE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS PARTIES OVER A PERIOD, EVER SINCE THAT RESOLUTION WAS PASSED BY THE UNITED NATIONS, AND I'M NOT GOING TO GET INTO THE MIDDLE OF THAT.

Q. TO GO BACK TO YOUR ORIGINAL STATEMENT, YOUR ORIGINAL STATEMENT SAID THAT WHEN IT IS USEFUL, THE UNITED STATES WILL PUT FORWARD ITS VIEWS. IS THIS SUCH A TIME? HAVE WE REACHED A POINT WHERE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE UNITED STATES TO BE MAKING --

A. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT.

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Q. I WANT TO GO BACK TO 242 AND WHAT YOU SAID. I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU ARE URGING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT NOT TO MAKE ANY FINAL STATEMENT OF THEIR INTERPRETATION BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER COMES HERE. AND IF WHAT HE SAID IN THE KNESSET YESTERDAY IS SUCH A THING, YOU WOULD LIKE THEM TO CHANGE IT.

A. I'M SAYING THAT WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL WANT TO DISCUSS THIS WITH US VERY THOROUGHLY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ON SOMETHING OF SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THEIR OWN GOAL OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT TO THE DISPUTES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WILL TAKE PLACE WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER COMES TO WASHINGTON.

Q. BUT THE DECISION WAS APPARENTLY MADE AND ANNOUNCED IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT YESTERDAY.

A. I'M SORRY I'M NOT SUFFICIENTLY INFORMED AS TO HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AND WHEN THEY ARE FINAL IN ISRAEL, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH YOUR QUESTION.

Q. WELL, DO YOU THINK THAT AN INTERPRETATION BY ISRAEL OF 242 PRIOR TO THE VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER HERE AND A DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE AN OBSTACLE TO THE PEACE PROCESS?

A. I CAN'T ADDRESS THAT FOR YOU.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY POSITION ON THE ISRAELI REQUEST FOR AN INCREASED MILITARY SUPPLIES ISSUE?

A. YES. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION IN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT THAT ISRAEL MUST HAVE THE ABILITY
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SUCCESSFULLY TO DEFEND ITSELF. OUR COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY IS UNSHAKABLE. THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY VANCE, AND OTHERS HAVE REAFFIRMED ON MANY OCCASIONS THIS COMMITMENT WHICH IS A CORNERSTONE OF UNITED STATES-MIDDLE EAST POLICY. WE WOULD NOT USE MILITARY OR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN ANY WAY THAT WOULD JEOPARDIZE ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

Q. DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE REQUEST WILL BE LOOKED AT FAVORABLY, POSITIVELY, THE PRESENT ONE INCREASING FROM 1 BILLION DOLLARS TO 1.5 BILLION DOLLARS?

A. I DON'T HAVE ANY FIGURES HERE FOR YOU, BUT WE WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW WITH DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN ISRAEL'S MILITARY EQUIPMENT NEEDS. THESE TALKS ARE CONTINUING AND WE DO NOT WANT TO GET INTO SPECIFICS. HOWEVER, WE WOULD STRESS THAT WE VIEW ISRAEL'S DEFENSE NEEDS SYMPATHETICALLY, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THOSE NEEDS. OUR ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL IS ONGOING AND LONG-RANGE, AS ARE OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS AT SEVERAL LEVELS ON THESE MATTERS.

Q. DO YOU THINK THIS WILL HELP THE PEACE PROCESS AT THE PRESENT? I MEAN CONSIDERING SYMPATHETICALLY THEIR REQUESTS, TO BE RESPONSIVE TO ISRAEL'S DEFENSE REQUESTS?

A. THERE IS NO CHANGE IN POLICY HERE. I'M NOT DEALING WITH SPECIFIC AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE, AND I AM NOT PREVIEWING ANY DECISION WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN TAKEN; BUT, OBVIOUSLY, A CORNERSTONE OF OUR POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS TO GUARANTEE THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL THROUGH A MILITARY AID PROGRAM.

2. FOLLOWING ARE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AT THE NOON BRIEFING MARCH 8.

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Q. WHAT COMMENT DO YOU HAVE OF WEIZMAN'S STATEMENT YESTERDAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL AGREED THERE WOULD BE A HALT IN THE EXPANSION OF FURTHER BUILDING OF SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES FOR TWO OR THREE

WEEKS?

A. OUR POSITION ON SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, WHICH WE HAVE STATED ON MANY OCCASIONS, REMAINS UNCHANGED, AND WE HAVE NOTHING TO ADD.

Q. DID WE FURNISH THE ISRAELIS WITH A LIST OF COUNTRIES FOR WHICH WE WOULD NOT APPROVE THE SALE OF KFIR AIRCRAFT OR ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT? IS TAIWAN ON SUCH A LIST?

A. WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT COUNTRIES TO WHICH WE WOULD NOT FAVOR EXPORT OF THE KFIR BECAUSE OF REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. THE ISRAELIS ARE WELL AWARE THAT SALES TO ANY COUNTRY WOULD REQUIRE OUR ADVANCE APPROVAL. AS FOR TAIWAN, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE STATED PUBLICLY YESTERDAY THAT THEY ARE NOT CONSIDERING THE KFIR. VANCE

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